(b) whether Chief Ministers were of the view that Central and States needed to put in more efforts to attract private investment in agricultural marketing activities;

(c) whether to boost private agricultural marketing, the sub-committee has recommended doing away with the provisions like levy, control on movement, transportation, storage and marketing of agricultural produce under the Essential Commodities Act; and

(d) whether Government have accepted the recommendations?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTI LAL BHURIA): (a) A meeting of National Development Council (NDC) was held on 29.5.2007 to consider issues concerning the agriculture sector.

(b) Yes, Sir. Several Members of the NDC, which include *inter-alia* Chief Ministers, emphasized the need to attract more private investment in agricultural marketing activities.

(c) The NDC's Working Group on Marketing Reforms, Contract Farming and the Agro Processing Sector has recommended dispensing with legal provisions relating to levy control on movement, transportation, storage and marketing of agricultural produce under the Essential Commodities Act.

(d) The Government is already pursuing reforms in the agricultural marketing sector by encouraging states to amend laws which put restrictions on movement transportation, storage, marketing of agricultural produce and private investment in agricultural marketing infrastructure.

Preservation of local seeds

2607. KUMARI NIRMALA DESHPANDE: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) as the local seeds are disappearing what steps are being planned to preserve all varieties of local seeds; and

(b) why the farmers are being discouraged to use the local seeds and to exchange them with other farmers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) The National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources (NBPGR), New Delhi is collecting, conserving and documenting the germplasm of crop plants including seeds of local landraces/farmer's varieties in National Genebank as also under the provisions of Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmer's Rights Act (PPV and FR Act), 2001. The National Genebank presently holds more than 3.50 lakh accessions of over 1,200 crop/plant species.

(b) The Seeds Act, 1966, Seeds Rules, 1968 and PPV and FR Act, 2001 do not restrict farmers to use and exchange local seeds among them for sowing purposes. Farmers/ farming communities are/shall be recognized in respect of their contribution for conserving, improving and making available plant genetic resources for the development of new plant varieties under the provisions of PPV and FR Act, 2001. However, improved varieties/hybrids of crops are also being promoted to get higher yield and quality in crops.